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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE DECORATION OF A FIFTH AVENUE MANSION.

BY WILLIAM R. BRADSHAW.



DECORATION at present is passing through a stage of transformation. The flatness of the walls and ceilings that was so universally prevalent a few years ago, is giving way to the newer method of treatment in which a decided feeling for form has taken possession of the minds of decorators. The eye has a peculiar repugnance to flat surfaces, unbroken by modeling or architectural construction, with the great beauty of light and shade that results from the adoption of such methods.

It is true that the extraordinary narrowness of the houses in all large cities is responsible for the want of any interior decoration. Millionaires themselves deem themselves happy if they can get squeezed into a house built upon a twenty five foot lot, and seem to take it for granted that the only rational way of existence is to live in a house built in the telescope fashion in which the rooms open one after another, without any privacy whatever being given to any of the apartments.

Nowadays, in the better style of houses, no matter how narrow the rooms may be, there is a decided desire to break the monotony of the wall surfaces by elaborately carved mantels, made of mahogany, cherry, or some other equally beautiful

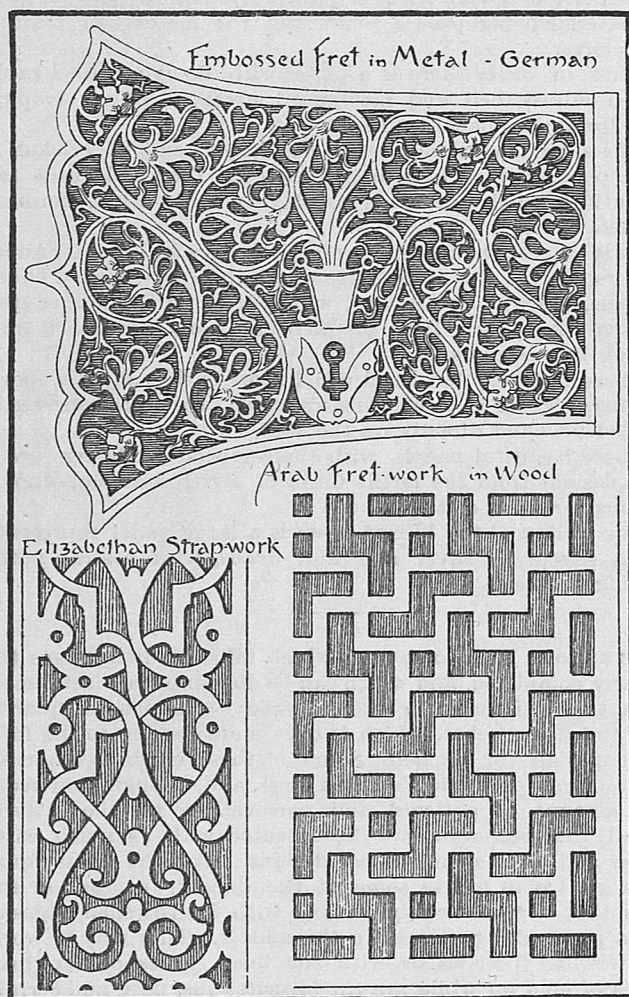


FIG. 28.—FRETWORK IN WOOD AND METAL.

wood. The walls are becoming wainscoted with wood similar to the trimmings of the doors and windows, and there is added some beautiful grille work in archways leading from one room to another.

Where the rooms open out upon the hallway there is seen

an artistic arrangement of the balustrade, and not infrequently, where the stairs require to be lighted, a little balcony filled with Kharan lattice work is projected into the dining-room, or library, as the case may be.

In the library, the walls are frequently covered with both book-cases and wood sheathing, and all this exhibits the decided desire to give form in designing equal prominence with color effects.

The residence of Mr. William Zeigler, 624 Fifth Avenue, is a corner house, and in this respect has advantages of light that are not usually bestowed upon ordinary houses. The house is

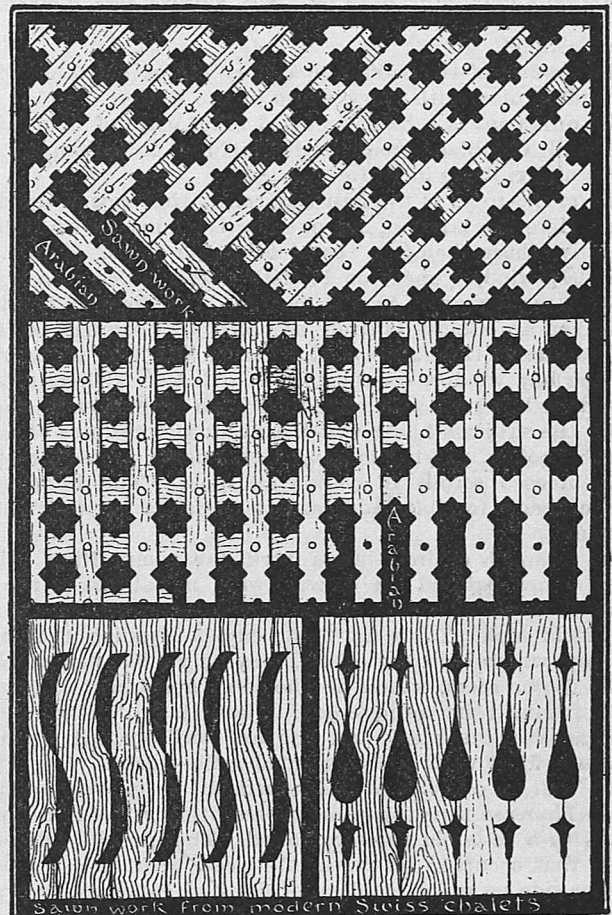


FIG. 29.—SAWN WORK.—Ingenious Patterns Produced by Very Simple Means.

built of brown stone, and the interior is a beautiful example of the art of the worker in wood, as well as that of the decorator.

When we say that the decoration of the house has been in charge of Messrs. Dabelstein & Johansmeyer, New No. 345 Columbus Avenue, we are preparing our readers for a description of something very fine, as these gentlemen are in the front rank of New York decorators.

The vestibule is entirely sheathed in dark oak paneling. The floor is a mosaic panel. The hall is wainscoted in antique oak, of which material also the very elaborate balustrade of the stairway is composed. The wall above the wainscoting has a blended ground, and glazed in old red and ecru, on which are delineated in harmonizing colors a series of panels in well balanced Italian Renaissance scroll effects in "Applique Relief," the ornaments being shaded, there being no regular border to the panels.

The work was designed by Mr. Dabelstein of the firm, and stamped with that originality and grace that characterizes this gentleman's work.

The cornice is picked out in dull red tones, while the ceiling has a longitudinal panel, having a border composed of a series of small panels decorated with original applique effects in Renaissance scrollwork.

The feeling imparted by the hallway is that of a warm, rich, satisfying decoration, that requires no further embellishment.

How is the parlor decorated?

The scheme of color employed in the parlor is that of a turquoise or celestial blue tint, that, carried up on the walls,

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looses itself in the center of the ceiling in a blending of stippled cream.

The mantel is of carved wood in the Colonial style, decorated in cream and gold, with Colonial carvings thereon. It has a beveled plate glass mirror, with pilasters and frieze. The enclosed fireplace is surrounded with a slab of polished Mexican onyx, edged with a brass border, and there are brass fire-dogs on the hearth.

The woodwork is in cream and gold, the walls being decorated with a dull turquoise satin damask, with a beautiful Colonial design in silver gray.

The frieze is covered with a mass of Colonial ornament in plastic relief modeled by hand, the colors being gold and cream on a blended pale blue ground. The cornice has a deep blue ground with a scattered Colonial ornament in white and gold in plastic relief.

The ground of the ceiling is a blending of the blue of the walls and cornice, with ivory white in the center.

The ornament is a hand-modeled relief maze of Renaissance scrolls and Colonial wreaths, delightfully interchanged with festoons and ribbons in white and gold.

The music-room is the first apartment that opens upon the parlor. Here the large square opening is trimmed with polished mahogany, there being a two-foot grille panel at top. An elliptic bay window opens on Fiftieth street, which also is trimmed with mahogany. As will be seen, the four walls of the music-room are almost entirely occupied by openings on three sides, leading to the hallway, the parlor and the dining-room, while the bay window occupies the fourth side. There are four wall spaces, however, which are filled with painted satin on ecru ground, the subjects being well-balanced compositions of cupids in natural colors, playing musical instruments, seated or standing on Rococo scrolls in yellow and gold. The decoration is vivid, correct, forcible and artistic, and is masterly in its treatment.

The ceiling is entirely brush work, the composition being a Rococo panel, painted on canvas, with medallions at the four corners filled with frescoes of musical instruments in dull self-tones of old pink. There are flying cupids invading the field of the panel, which is in sky effects, playing violins, flutes, etc.

The dining room, which is the next apartment in order, is heavily trimmed in antique oak. There is a high wainscoting and immense mantelpiece, and the archway opening upon the staircase is filled with finely executed grille-work.

The wall on one side of the apartment is entirely occupied with an immense tapestry panel representing a modern fowling scene, with a setter in the foreground. The opposite side of the room is that occupied by the mantelpiece, with tapestry panels on either side on which emblems of fish and game are accurately delineated.

The ceiling is paneled in oak, the panels being decorated with conventional ornament on canvas, blending so thoroughly with the woodwork as at first to deceive you, thus making the tapestry paintings on wall the more prominent.

We do not see why it should be thought necessary that music-rooms should contain nothing but emblems of music, and that dining-rooms should contain nothing but emblems of something to eat. On our part we would brave orthodoxy and put out everything that suggested music or eating from the music or dining-room by way of a change. We would let the realities be the decorative treatment on these topics.

The next apartment is the conservatory, which is semi-circular. Between it and the dining-room is a partition filled with stained-glass windows, passing through which, we enter a semi-circular apartment with a circle of leaded windows and a conical roof filled with rock-crystal lights. This apartment, like all the others in the house, is lit both by gas and electricity, and heated by steam. The trimmings and shelves are in antique oak.

On the first floor the front chamber is the library. The walls are decorated in Titian red velour. The trimmings are in polished mahogany, and there is an elliptic bay on Fifth Avenue.

The ceiling is frescoed in a Titian red tint, with wonderfully fine arabesques in the "European" style (which word we make use of as another term for "Renaissance").

These scrolls are in dull red, outlined in silver.

The smoking-room is a small apartment that leads from the library, and for its size is a charming apartment. The walls are stippled in an olive tint, and there is a beautiful scroll frieze in relief and European paneling in the ceiling in harmonizing tints.

The bath-room on the same floor is a perfectly equipped Russian bath. There is a marble steam-chest, with a heavy white marble slab on top. The floor is tiled, and both walls

and ceiling are sheathed in white tiles. There is the ordinary bath-tub, with its silver-plated fittings, and there is a needle-bath with a great array of circular pipes, and all the accessories of the toilet.

On the second floor the family chamber in front is decorated in tones of blue. The wood is natural cherry, beautifully polished. The walls are stippled to simulate white lace hung on a blue ground. On the top of the simulated lace are festoons of roses au naturel, and the ceiling is an immense panel of lace with a wreath of roses surrounding the chandelier.

The dressing-room is entered between mahogany Corinthian pillars, depending between which is a beautiful Moorish lamp. There is a circular panel in the ceiling, European style, in gold and rose-pink tints, while the frieze is a frescoing of scrolls on the wall without any moulding to mark it off from the wall-space.

There are two dressing alcoves, remarkable for the immense amount of wood construction, the work of Messrs. Metz & Meyer, Buffalo, N. Y., who have done the woodwork of the entire house.

On the third story the first two chambers are trimmed in quartered sycamore, which is a beautiful wood. The walls are stippled in buff, the frieze in olive. The ceilings have blue fields with buff borders, and in the center of the stiling are circular panels of roses.

The rear room is trimmed in cherry, the walls being in light salmon. There is a deep salmon cornice, and a salmon colored frieze. The ceiling is in same tones, and has a square panel encircling an oval panel, outlined by classic wreaths in gold.

The other apartments of the house do not call for any special mention, their decoration being as sumptuous as the rooms already mentioned. We must not, however, forget to call attention to the billiard room in the basement, which contains work in plastic relief of a thoroughly unique character.

The walls have a high wainscoting in antique oak, above which there is a wide frieze of panels representing various games, the material being plastic relief, and the method of treatment in old silver.

First in order there is a panel with finely-moulded rapiers, padded cuirass, belt and face-guard, arranged like a trophy of arms, forming a panel by itself.

The second panel represents the implements of cricket and tennis playing, with bats, balls, net, etc. Dice and cards make a beautiful panel, the cards overlaying each other, forming a complete circle.

Next comes a panel representing checkers and chess. Another panel represents the accoutrements of the race-track. There is a saddle, stirrups, bridle, cap, whip, etc. Still another panel represents hunting. Here we have a deer's head with horns, hunting knives, guns, etc.

There is a very beautiful panel representing aquatic sports—yachting. There is a helmsman's wheel, oars, anchors, etc., all modeled by hand directly on the wall.

These beautiful panels, with their superb modeling, are the latest designs from the fertile brain of Mr. Dabelstein, who has a genius for work of this kind.

The ceiling of the billiard-room is a large panel representing mosaic effects in silver and dull drabs, with a strap pattern covering the field.

EVERYONE likes some work which takes up little space till it is nearly completed, and which can be done in small installments. A beautiful quilt may be made nowadays of alternate squares of linen and fine crochet, which is once more coming to the fore as an occupation for women. Some of these crochet patterns resemble old guipure and Venetian laces, and, though they require some amount of patience and perseverance till the pattern is learned, they can afterward be executed with as much ease as simpler and more commonplace designs. For the linen squares it is a good plan to use some of the delicate cambric or linen doilys that are sold ready finished with hemstitched edges and with a pretty design traced in the middle. They may be worked with washing filosselles or with the finer makes of flax thread. Shades of gold on white are the favorites just now, and certainly they are extremely restful to the sight after the eternal reds and navy blues which where at one time considered the only really ingrain colors. It is not difficult to find a crochet lace for these bedspreads which will correspond with the squares.

A good deal of ingenuity is shown in enriching crochet or machine-made squares by working them over more or less closely with colored silks, gold braid and tinsel, thus transforming them into rich looking trimmings for wall pockets, etc.